

P R E S I D E N T ' S C A N C E R P A N E L

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The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Few families in America have not been touched by cancer. Yet a great many people—both the privileged and the poor—find that at the very time they need the most effective cancer care our research enterprise has devised, the health care delivery system of our Nation fails them. **People with cancer need your help now.**

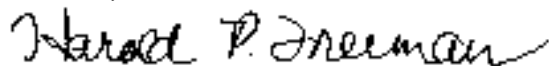
Mr. President, profound advances are being made in cancer research, but our health care delivery system is broken. It is the root of vast and unnecessary suffering, personal financial ruin, and loss of dignity for millions of people with cancer, who must fight their way into and through a dysfunctional system even as they struggle to save their very lives. The overwhelming majority of these people have worked and contributed to the nation throughout their adulthood. Many pay sizeable health insurance premiums every month, believing they are protecting themselves and their families, but may find themselves faced with unreimbursed cancer care costs that quickly drain their life savings. Many work hard every day, but cannot afford even basic health insurance. Some are unable to work, but are no less deserving of proper care when faced with a life-threatening illness.

In 2000 and 2001, acting according to its legislative mandate and in your behalf, the President's Cancer Panel traveled to every region of the country to listen to the voices of cancer patients and survivors, family care givers, cancer patient advocates and volunteers, and to health care professionals who provide cancer care. The attached report summarizes their moving and unsparingly candid testimony, and presents the Panel's recommendations for addressing the cancer care problems faced each day in every neighborhood in America.

These problems are many. They include lack of health insurance—a dire problem faced by 44 million people—inability to pay the out-of-pocket costs of cancer care, particularly oral medication costs; public and private health plan restrictions; physical distance from sources of care; and lack of transportation. Relatively few people with cancer receive full, accurate, and understandable information about their disease, either from their health care providers or from other sources. These problems stem primarily from insufficient provider communication or knowledge, and from language, literacy, and cultural barriers. Moreover, bias based on cultural and racial differences far too often causes some providers to offer less than optimal care, and causes some patients to avoid accessing the care they need because of fear or mistrust.

I hope that through the attached report, you too will hear these voices from every corner of America and take action—their voices could as easily be our own. The President's Cancer Panel enjoins you to **use the power and compassion of your office to direct all necessary Federal agencies to work together to implement the actions recommended in this report.** I would welcome and look forward to an opportunity to meet with you to discuss this most urgent issue for the American public.

Sincerely,



Harold P. Freeman, M.D.
Chairman